

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MC-02 SCSE-00 SCA-01 EB-06 FAA-00

DOT-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-10 JUSE-00 NSAE-00

RSC-01 SNM-02 SY-04 TRSE-00 USIA-15 NSC-05 OES-04

OMB-01 DODE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 CAB-05 COME-00 FBIE-00

L-02 /079 W

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R 071857Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4721

UNCLAS MEXICO 9459

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CPRS, MX

SUBJECT: CONFISCATION OF U.S. GENERAL AVIATION AIRCRAFT IN MEXICO

1. AS MEXICAN AUTHORITIES BEAR DOWN ON ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFIC AND OTHER CONTRABAND, THE POSSIBILITY OF AIRCRAFT CONFISCATION FOR RELATIVELY MINOR OFFENSES HAS INCREASED. FAILURE TO FILE A FLIGHT PLAN UPON DEPARTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES OR AN EMERGENCY LANDING ON MEXICAN SOIL CAN RESULT IN IMPRISONMENT FOR THE PILOT AND CONFISCATION OF THE AIRCRAFT.

2. THE MOST NOTORIOUS CASE IS THAT OF ROBERT G. CHAMPION, A RETIRED USAF SERGEANT WHO, ON DECEMBER 19, 1973, WAS ARRESTED AT HERMOSILLO FOR HAVING LANDED HIS RENTED AIRCRAFT (PIPER CHEROKEE N-5234-S) THERE WITHOUT A FLIGHT PLAN. MR. CHAMPION HAS BEEN IN JAIL SINCE THAT DATE AND RECENTLY WAS CONVICTED OF ILLEGAL ENTRY AND BRINGING CONTRABAND (THE AIRCRAFT) INTO MEXICO. HE WAS SENTENCED TO 4 1/2 YEARS IMPRISONMENT AND THE AIRCRAFT WAS CONFISCATED. MR. CHAMPION HAD VERY LITTLE EXPERIENCE AS A PILOT AND HE CLAIMED TO HAVE BECOME LOST AFTER DEPARTING TUCSON, ARIZONA. NOTHING WAS FOUND ON BOARD THE AIRCRAFT AND A DEA INVESTIGATION OF CHAMPION AND THE RENTAL UNCLASSIFIED

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AGENCY (SLATON FLYING SERVICE OF LUBBOCK, TEXAS) FAILED TO REVEAL

ANYTHING IMPLICATING EITHER ONE IN ANY TYPE OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.

3. ANOTHER NOTORIOUS CASE INVOLVES MR. REX COLLIER WHO FLEW PIPER COMANCHE N-7387-P INTO MEXICO ON MARCH 11, 1973. MR. COLLIER THOUGHT ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS ENTRY INTO MEXICO HAD BEEN COMPLETED, BUT UPON LANDING DISCOVERED THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. MR. COLLIER WAS TAKING TWO COMPANIONS TO A FISHING CAMP NEAR HERMOSILLO. HE WAS ARRESTED, SPENT A WEEK IN JAIL AND WAS RELEASED ONLY AFTER A RATHER LARGE FEE WAS PAID TO A LOCAL ATTORNEY. THE AIRCRAFT WAS CONFISCATED. INQUIRIES BY THE FBI DEVELOPED NO ADVERSE INFORMATION RE COLLIER.

4. EFFORTS BY THE EMBASSY TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF THESE TWO AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN FRUITLESS. THERE ARE THREE ADDITIONAL U.S. AIRCRAFT THAT HAVE BEEN ORDERED RELEASED BY COMPETENT MEXICAN AUTHORITIES TO THEIR AMERICAN OWNERS. HOWEVER, THE AIRCRAFT HAPPEN TO BE IN THE CUSTODY OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY WHO REFUSE TO RELEASE THEM. IN TOTAL, APPROXIMATELY 90 GENERAL AVIATION AIRCRAFT OF U.S. REGISTRY ARE IN THE HAND OF MEXICAN AUTHORITIES. ALTHOUGH MANY OF THESE ARE RECOVERABLE UNDER A CONVENTION BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES, MEXICAN AUTHORITIES ARE, IN GENERAL, UNCOOPERATIVE.

5. THEREFORE, THE EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT THE FAA ISSUE A NOTICE TO ALL U.S. AIRMEN (PREFERABLE VIA THE NOTAM PROCEDURE) WARNING OF THE DANGERS OF CONFISCATION IF MEXICAN REGULATIONS ARE IN ANY WAY VIOLATED. IN PARTICULAR, PILOTS SHOULD BE WARNED AGAINST ENTRY INTO MEXICO, BE IT DELIBERATE OR ACCIDENTAL, WITHOUT A PROPER FLIGHT PLAN AND THE NECESSARY PERMISSION. FIXED-BASE OPERATORS AND OTHER LESSORS OR AIRCRAFT ALSO SHOULD BE WARNED AGAINST THE DANGERS OF LEASING AIRCRAFT FOR USE IN MEXICO.
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